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Kelly wants all college tuition deductible

By **PAUL NELSON**pnelson@thejournalnews.com

THE JOURNAL NEWS

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Victoria Setian knows what her father's reaction will be when he hears about a proposal that would allow parents to deduct their children's tuition expenses from their federal income tax.

"I can only imagine how happy my father will be," the Rockland Community College student said of the More Money for College Act that Rep. Sue Kelly, R-Katonah, discussed during her visit to the RCC campus yesterday.

"That would be a big relief for my family because my sister goes to Stevens Institute of Technology, and the tuition is a hefty sum," said Setian, a Chestnut Ridge resident and freshman liberal arts major.

Under the bill, all out-of-pocket college tuition expenses would be deductible for families or the students. Under existing law, up to \$4,000 can be deducted yearly through 2005.

Kelly was joined during yesterday's news conference by County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and RCC President Cliff Wood, both of whom stressed that county colleges stand to benefit from the legislation.

"Whether you're working parents putting two or three kids through college at once, a student paying your own way through undergraduate school, or an adult taking some courses later in life ... the federal government needs to let you keep more of your own money for college rather than making you send it to Washington in taxes," Kelly said.

The average college tuition rises 8 percent annually, about twice the rate of inflation, Kelly said. At that pace, Kelly said, the cost of a college education doubles every nine years.

The annual tuition for a state resident taking 12 credits at RCC is about \$2,600.

Vanderhoef said the bill would bring "much needed tax relief to Rockland County families," especially considering the high cost of living in the area.

"This bill will not only help students and their families with a break on taxes, but it will also

Dominican College, Orangeburg

2004-05 — \$16,600.

2003-04 — \$16,000

2002-03 — \$15,000

2001-02 — \$13,290

2000-01 — \$12,660

St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill

2004-05 — \$15,300

2003-04 — \$14,500

2002-03 — \$13,800

2001-02 — \$13,100

2000-01 — \$12,500

Rockland Community College, Ramapo:

2004-05 — \$2,600

2003-04 — \$2,500

2002-03 — \$2,400

2001-02 — \$2,400

2000-01 — \$2,325

At the Rockland Campus of Nyack College, tuition for the 2004-05 academic year is \$6,995 while the projected cost for 2005-06 is \$7,375.

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give working adults and seniors who might be thinking about taking classes a good reason to go back and continue their education," Vanderhoef said.

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The legislation would help students who narrowly fail to qualify for financial aid, said Wood, adding that RCC attracts people with varied backgrounds who will benefit from the tax write-off.

Alex MacFall of Stony Point, a freshman graphic design major, said the bill would help him.

"It seems to get harder and harder to get financial aid because you have to make no money," said the 18-year-old who receives about \$250 in grants and pays the rest himself.

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Victoria Setian's mother, Madlen, estimated she and her husband shell out \$30,000 in tuition per year for their two girls. She fully expects that figure to increase and is grateful for any help they can get.

"I think it's wonderful if we can get a break because it all adds up," she said. "The cost of education is one of the most expensive in your lifetime, besides your house, so anything that can be done to alleviate the burden on parents, we're all for it."

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